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ADDRESS BY MR. GEORGE F. KENNAN, DIRECTOR, POLICY PLANNING STAFF, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, AT THE HERALD-TRIBUNE FORUM, NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1948, AT 8:45 P.M., E.S.T.

United States and the United Nations

Those of us who have occasion to discuss foreign affairs from time to time with interested groups of Americans continue to be asked a great many questions about this Government's attitude toward the United Nations. These questions reveal not only a deep preoccupation with this subject but in many cases a considerable degree of bewilderment and confusion about it.

Why should this be? After all, there is no mystery about all this. The basic facts are simple. They have been set forth clearly and authoritatively on many occasions. Secretary Marshall stated them last spring before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. Senator Vandenberg stated them more recently, in several passages of his remarkable Freedom House speech.

They are substantially these: Three and a half years ago, during the final phases of the recent war, this country decided to join in the establishment of a world organization devoted to the preservation of peace and the enrichment of international life.

It was clear to everyone at that time that such an organization could not be asked to make the peace which was to follow the war; much less to enforce a peace which had not yet been made.

It was clear that its full effectiveness would rest on the ability of the great powers to agree among themselves on a peace settlement and to retain some basic unity of approach in the post-war period.

It was clear that even outside the question of international security, in all those myriads of other questions which normally have nothing to do with the problems of peace and war, an international organization could develop its full usefulness only if the world community could be relieved of the worst of those fears and tensions with which it had so long been plagued.

Three

Three years have now passed, but these things have not yet happened. It has not yet been possible for the great powers to agree on a peace settlement. The international atmosphere has continued to be dominated by the most serious fears and tensions.

The world organization has therefore not had the opportunity to develop its full effectiveness, and will not have such opportunity until the basic causes of international unrest have been removed.

This is not the fault of the organization itself, or of the idea behind it. It is the fault of the conditions under which it has been forced to operate.

In these circumstances, it is the aim, and I think the duty, of this Government to proceed with patience and confidence -- but also with realism -- in matters involving the United Nations; to show itself a true friend and a powerful friend of the organization; to nurture it through these trying times of darkness and uncertainty, taking care neither to weaken it through neglect nor to break its back by over-loading it with tasks beyond its capacities; and in this way to preserve its existence and its hope for that better day when a world relieved of the nightmare of fear can settle down, as the great majority of human beings yearn to have it do, to the relatively happy tasks -- of reconstruction and development.

If today many people are still unable to understand this simple sequence of thought and action, it seems to me that perhaps their difficulty lies in a misunderstanding not so much about what the present United Nations should be expected to do but rather about what <u>any</u> international organization <u>could</u> be expected to do.

It should be helpful to such people to understand that security is not something which can be suddenly bestowed upon the international community by any set of contractual relationships between its individual members. It is not something which can be brought in from without -- it must come from within. It must be a reflection of the attitudes and aspirations by which the members of that community live.

Human institutions are only what men make of them. International organization is no exception. It is only the product, and the vehicle, of many national policies. It has no magic of its own.

The Charter of the United Nations represents a code of international conduct which all its members have agreed to observe. It does not in itself provide, nor was it intended to provide, solutions for the differences which exist between nations. It does provide certain standards to guide international conduct, and certain mechanisms through which, in accordance with these standards, disputes and differences may be regulated.

The will

The will to peace, when it is more than an affectation, is the will to tolerance and self-restraint and accommodation in international life. Where it exists, and insofar as it exists, international organization can provide the means through which it may be translated into action.

But where this will is lacking, no international organization can replace it. When any important segment of the international community is ignorant or incredulous of its stake in the freedom and well-being of the community as a whole, and contemptuous of the ensuing responsibilities, then not even the most perfect legal system can bring security to the world.

For the preservation of peace is more than just abstention from war. It is the active and sincere cultivation of the peaceful association between nations. It is the conscious, systematic encouragement of every form of peaceful contact between peoples to the end that the prejudices and provincialisms and asperities of international life may gradually wear away, and the concept of a world community thrust roots into the minds of men. Without the development of this peaceful and free association, between individuals as well as between governments, peace can never be anything more than a flimsy and precarious respite from violence. Let this be pondered by those who profess to reconcile a devotion to the cause of peace with the sealing off of international frontiers, the punishment of individuals for association with foreigners, and the fanning of international suspicions for the furtherance of selfish political aims.

It would be easy for us here, this evening, to lull ourselves into a sense of complacency by repeating those generalities which have been uttered so often in connection with the United Nations.

But words and high resolves alone will not help us. Ours is too harsh a time for abstractions. If we mean business, when we speak of our determination to make the United Nations work, we must remember that we have before us a task as difficult and as arduous as any that this country has ever tackled in peace or in war. If this is really our purpose, then we must see to it that the realities of international life are so shaped and so aligned that they speak for themselves with an eloquence greater than words - that they convince the skeptical, as words have thus far failed to do, that the road of international collaboration is after all the fastest, the most practical, and the safest of the paths of national policy. And where people are not open to argument on considerations of the common good, then they must be shown that this same conclusion flows even from the narrowest and most embittered sense of self-interest, which it does.

This is the job we have to do.

It is not, in reality, a new task, or one that lies only before us. We have already been deeply engaged in it for a long time.

And it is not our task alone. It is a responsibility which we share with the other peace-loving nations of the world. It is entirely fallacious to regard the differences which now separate the United States and the Soviet Union merely as a struggle between those two powers. The conflict which exists inside the

United

United Nations is not a conflict between the United States and the U.S.S.R. It is a conflict between the majority of the U.N. members, acting in support of the Charter, and a group of governments who refuse to abide by its provisions or to recognize the over-riding international obligation which the Charter constitutes.

We have now reached one of the most complicated and delicate phases of this long and difficult effort. We have been compelled to place before the United Nations a matter of great seriousness which it had proven impossible to compose by peaceful means outside of the United Nations. We were aware that this would constitute a severe test of the organization, and one which we would have preferred to have spared it. But we had no alternatives other than to meet the threat of force with action in order to break the blockade of Berlin, or to do nothing at all and thus permit this threatening situation to develop in an ominous silence and uncertainty, conducive to every sort of alarmist speculation and hysteria.

This is a situation which is easy neither for us nor for our friends. It is going to take all we can bring to it in the way of steadiness and understanding and mutual confidence. But we must always understand that on the successful resolution of it there hangs more than the removal of restrictions on the supply of a single city; there hangs the removal of one more great obstacle on the road to a world in which international organization can really function.

Many of you will remember the words of Socrates, in the Dialogues of Plato:

> "Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils, -- no, nor the human race, as I believe, -- and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day."

Plato's state was the structure of his dreams -- of his imagination. We are more fortunate: the United Nations already has the reality of physical existence.

But the two concepts have much in common. Both are patterns for the future. Both aim at the organization of human life, within the limits of the known world of their day, in a manner consistent with the dignity of man and in a framework broad enough to give scope for his possibilities.

In both cases, the impediments to realization are plain, and the nature of the challenge flows clearly from them. Some way or other, we must find means to bring wisdom at least in the sense of an enlightened self-interest to those whose thoughts are today oriented solely to the pursuit of political greatness in the form of world dominion. For it is imperative that the peace-loving peoples of the world should be permitted to get on with this business of the development of international association for which the conditions of life in our time cry out so urgently and which have been so long delayed.

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